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SUBJECT: REAPING THE BENEFITS OF PEACE IN KWANZA SUL

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Devastated during Angola's 27-year civil war, the once embattled province of Kwanza Sul is on the mend. Ongoing U.S.-funded demining programs are key to the government's success in reopening primary and secondary roads and agricultural land. U.S. assistance in partnership with Chevron is also stimulating revival of once-thriving coffee production. U.S. partnership with Esso is helping to address health and education needs. Nevertheless, huge challenges remain, especially in inducing Angolans to return to the under-populated countryside and in completing the task of rebuilding the province's human and physical infrastructure.
END SUMMARY.

Kwanza Sul: Emerging from the ashes

¶2. (U) Kwanza Sul is a rural coastal province of 12 municipalities covering 23,000 square miles. Its population is estimated at 1,500,000; since the last census was completed in 1970, provincial authorities do not have more precise population data. The province is strategically located; it shares borders with 6 other provinces and links Luanda with the central interior. Kwanza Sul saw heavy fighting and changed hands multiple times during Angola's 27-year civil war. In town and across the countryside, most buildings and bridges were destroyed or damaged and primary and secondary roads were heavily mined, as well as other strategic points. All colonial-era factories in the province were likewise destroyed, and economic activity, which once made Kwanza Sul extremely productive, including exports of coffee, cotton, and fish products, was reduced to subsistence-level farming. During the war, a majority of the population fled to urban centers in search of security and work.

¶3. (U) After six years of peace, Kwanza Sul's economy is coming back to life. The GRA is making extensive investments in building and repairing the province's infrastructure, which has reconnected lush agricultural land in the interior with coastal markets. During his April 8-10 tour of the province, Ambassador Mozena heard from provincial governor Sarafim do Prado that all primary roads have been demined and main north-south roads have been paved; key secondary roads into the interior have also been demined, graded and repaired, and both temporary and permanent bridges have been erected. These investments cut travel time to remote parts of the province in half, and access to markets is pushing the rapid expansion of agricultural production. Note: The quality of the road work is questionable at best; the roads often lack adequate drainage, and roads completed by Chinese contractors as recently as 5 months ago are already showing signs of severe degradation. End note

¶4. (U) Investment is also underway in the province's urban

areas. Prado told the Ambassador that the GRA has contracted the Brazilian company, Odebrecht, to rebuild and repair infrastructure and key buildings in the urban centers of Sumbe, Porto Amboim, and Gabela through a Brazilian line of credit. Five municipalities in Kwanza Sul are each receiving from the central government three to five million USD annually as part of the GRA's decentralization pilot program.

Demining for Economic Growth

¶15. (U) The landmines and unexploded ordinance (UXO) that litter the countryside impede rapid expansion of agricultural production, threaten lives and restrict access to land and economic growth. The 2007 Landmine Impact Survey identified 269 areas of suspected landmine contamination, which affect 169 communities in the provinces.

¶16. (U) Demining projects by the USG-funded NGO Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), make clear role of landmine and UXO clearance in returning land to productive use, restoring access to water and enabling economic growth. During the Ambassador's visit to a rural village demined by NPA in 2005, the village administrator thanked the USG for its assistance and described how cultivation of the demined fields led to increased agricultural production which, for the first time, enabled the village to produce beyond the subsistence level. Today, the village not only runs a thriving roadside market, but also sells its produce to distributors in the provincial capital of Sumbe.

Opportunities Brewing for Angolan Coffee

¶17. (U) The GRA is partnering with the USG-sponsored

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Cooperative League of the United States (CLUSA) and the U.S. oil company Chevron to breathe new life into the province's coffee industry. Kwanza Sul's 18,000 hectares of coffee plantations and small farms currently average 130 tons per hectare, as compared with the 800-1000 ton colonial-era average. CLUSA's programs have connected 4,000 small farmers with micro credit, training on modern coffee production techniques, and seedlings from the National Coffee Institute to help farmers replace old trees and increase production. As production increases, CLUSA is also connecting farmers with the market. During the Ambassador's meeting with small coffee producers in Gabela, CLUSA representatives explained that the province's Amboim Robusta coffee is highly sought after for its blending properties, and that each year farmers cannot come close to the demand from foreign buyers.

¶18. (U) In addition, the GRA is exploring ways to support increased production in the region's remaining large coffee plantations, which continue to face the twin challenges of lack of capital and manpower. The governor stated that, in many cases, coffee growers cannot expand production because they cannot afford the manual labor needed in the province's rocky, hilly terrain, which precludes the use of mechanical means. Coffee production in the colonial era was fueled by forced and contract labor brought into the province from southern Angola.

Expansion in the Health and Education Sectors

¶19. (U) The GRA is increasing capacity in the health sector. All of the province's 12 municipal capitals now have hospitals, and health clinics are increasingly common at the district and sometimes village levels. Many challenges remain, and a lack of qualified staff has delayed the opening of some hospitals and clinics. The provincial government relies entirely on doctors and nurses contracted by the central government to staff hospitals and health centers; most are Cuban, North Korean, Russian or Vietnamese.

Qualified medical professionals are rarely available beyond the municipal capital level, and even there facilities and resources are limited. The Kibala Municipal Hospital pediatrician told the Ambassador that he diagnoses up to half of malaria cases by symptoms alone because he does not have time to use the rapid test kits, which are also regularly out of stock. Local health professionals noted that malaria remains the number one killer of children under five in the province, and expressed appreciation for assistance from the President's Malaria Initiative's for helping defeat malaria, especially through training and the anti-malarial drug Coartem. With PMI's assistance there is now sufficient Coartem to supply all health facilities in the province; municipal administrators are currently working with the USG-funded NGO Africare to make the drug available at all levels of the health care system, and to improve diagnosis of malaria.

More challenges abound in education

¶10. (U) Progress and challenges are also evident in the education sector. The governor told the Ambassador that 90 percent of school-aged children are now in school, compared with only 55 percent in 2002. These numbers, however, mask the fact that school is mandatory only through the eighth grade; past this level children are not considered "school age." As there are no high schools outside of municipal capitals, most rural students never have an opportunity to continue beyond primary school. Staffing also remains a problem, especially in the rural interior of the province. The Kibala municipal administrator told the Ambassador that the Ministry of Education has funded 100 teaching positions in the municipality, but this school year they were able to find only 48 qualified teachers. The province is working to expand its teacher training program; people over age 18 and who have completed the 8th grade can complete a certification program to become teachers. Provincial authorities are rightly concerned about the quality of education such "teachers" provide.

¶11. (U) COMMENT: Kwanza Sul is a province in which the benefits of peace are manifested concretely by communities, villages and fields slowly coming back to life. Hope is in the faces of many of the province's residents, and local government is generally committed to the enormous task of making life better for its citizens. Despite the progress made over the past six years, the road ahead to reviving the cities, towns, and countryside of Kwanza Sul is long. In addition to the task of rebuilding a human and physical infrastructure that was totally destroyed by decades of war,

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the province must attract back the thousands of residents who fled the war. The dribble of returnees thus far underscores the enormity of this challenge. END COMMENT

MOZENA